

on routes where GSA has negotiated a contract fare unless an exception applies.

Exceptions focus on situations that lead to government cost savings or a clear mission that requires alternative travel plans. Please see your ethics counselor if you have further questions.

References:

J.E.R 4-100-4-4-102, 4-200-202, 4-3000;
FY 2202 DOD Authorization Act
(Public Law 107-107, Section 116)



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If you need advice on a particular situation, please contact SAF/GCA to set up an appointment with one of the attorneys.

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OFFICIAL TRAVEL

“Excellence in All We Do”



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This pamphlet provides a brief overview of the rules on the acceptance of travel expenses from a non-federal source, as well as the acceptance of travel benefits when performing official travel.

Acceptance of Travel Expenses from a Non-Federal Source

Payment for official travel may be accepted under the following circumstances:

- If the travel is performed for attendance at a meeting, conference, seminar, or similar event, related to your official duties.

Acceptance is not permitted for events in which the primary purpose is marketing the non-federal source's products or events required to carry out an agency's regulatory functions (for example: inspection, site visits, audits, investigations, etc.).

- The travel is primarily for the benefit of the government, not the organization paying for it.
- The travel approving authority (*with the advice of an ethics counselor*) determines that accepting travel reimbursement will not create a conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, between the "gift" of travel reimbursement and the employee's reason for traveling and official duties. This determination may not be made by the traveler him or herself.
- The travel reimbursement is approved *in advance* of the travel.
- Travel benefits must be provided in-kind or paid by check made payable to the Air Force or the treasury (not to the employee).
- If employees do not claim any government reimbursement on their travel

voucher for expenses paid by the non-federal source, this amounts to *fraud* and constitutes a serious offense.

- If travel reimbursement exceeds \$250, the traveler must submit a simple report (SF 326) to his or her ethics counselor upon completion of the travel.

What Belongs to the Government?

Frequent flyer miles, airline and hotel promotions, rewards, etc., now belong to you if the same promotional items are available to the public under the same terms and the benefits can be accepted at no additional cost to the government.

However, the government still owns the benefits in the following situation (*the involuntary bump rule*):

A traveler who is involuntarily bumped from a seat is considered to be "awaiting transportation" for per diem reimbursement. Therefore, the government is responsible for reimbursing the traveler's expenses and any additional compensation or benefits from the carrier belong to the government.

A promotional item includes frequent flyer miles, travel upgrades, and access to carrier clubs or facilities.

What Belongs to You?

- Frequent flyer miles, upgrades and access to carrier clubs or facilities may be retained by the employee for personal use in the following situations: a) the same promotional items are available to the public under the same terms; and b) the benefits can be accepted at no additional cost to the government.
- You are entitled to benefits resulting from a "voluntary bump" if the change to your flight plans will not impact the mission or cost the government additional expenses. If accepting the "bump" will affect the performance of your

duties, you may not accept it (or the benefits from it).

- You may receive on-the-spot upgrades when such upgrades are available to the public—or at least to a class of *all* federal government employees or *all* military members (regardless of rank or grade).

A travel upgrade can be a seat upgrade to first class, a luxury rental car in place of a compact, or a hotel room with a view.

- You are entitled to "Gold Card" privileges or similar memberships offered by certain airlines when earned by accumulating a large number of travel miles throughout the year.

Miscellaneous

Double Reimbursement

Travelers may not be reimbursed twice for the same travel expenses.

Example: If a meal is provided to a traveler as part of a conference or training fee, the traveler may not receive per diem for the same meal.

The Government Travel Card

Official travelers are required to use their government travel card to cover official expenses associated with his or her travel. The fact that the traveler may prefer to use a personal credit card (in order to obtain favorable travel or other incentive benefits) is irrelevant to this requirement.

Example: A traveler who has a personal credit card that would generate more desirable travel benefits in conjunction with an official trip may not use that personal card in lieu of the government travel card.

Contract Carriers

Federal travelers on official business may not use the contract carrier because of a personal preference (i.e. frequent flyer miles). Instead, they must use the GSA contract carrier flights